

## Forest Service Sidney R. Yates Building Tour

### The Future in Office Space

In January 2014, after one year of renovations, the Sidney R. Yates Building reopened its doors to the Forest Service (FS) employees. Prior to the renovation, FS personnel were located in the Yates building in Downtown DC and two leased office buildings in Rosslyn, Virginia. The consolidation of personnel is saving the FS over 5 million dollars annually in leasing costs and costs associated with running shuttles between the three buildings.

The newly renovated space houses 800 employees. Approximately 600 of the employees have assigned desk, the rest are “floaters.” Floaters are employees who telework at least 50% of their time and don’t have assigned seats. Instead of getting assigned space, floaters use desks that are for their use for only a day, called hoteling. Because the desk will be used by another floating employee the next day, employees cannot leave their belongings at these desks at the end of each day.

Part of the renovation included the incorporation of artistic theme representation found in every floor. The ground floor is the People’s floor, 1st floor is watersheds, followed by grasslands, forests, and sky. As you walk through the halls, you will find yourself seeing mountains, forests and sky motifs on glass doors or on furniture finishes, each representing FS mission areas. Other unique features are the pantry rooms and anchor points also found in all floors. Anchor points are used for printing, copying and saving hard copy files. No personal printers, coffee pots, microwaves, or refrigerators are allowed except in the pantry or anchor point areas. To make printing secure and convenient, employees can print at any anchor point in the building. Once employees send the documents to print, it saves to their lincpass. The system saves it for an entire day until the employees scan their lincpass at the printer.



Typical Office Space



Director's Office



Meeting Lounge

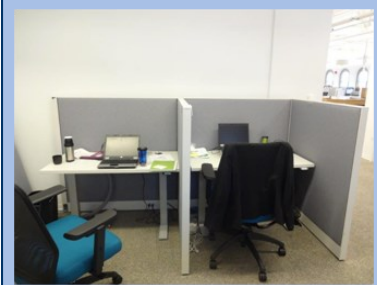


Pantry Rooms

During the tour, the guide emphasized the “We” not “Me” concept. This concept encourages collaboration and team work among employees. Furthermore, employees are encouraged to use the entire building and not feel confined to their individual workstations. The “We” not “Me” concept is evident in the fact that the entire building has only 8 private offices. Private offices were replaced with small workstations, about 50 conference rooms (many equipped with Mondopads), enclosed phone booths and meeting lounges. The numerous conference rooms and meeting lounges are used to encourage employees to collaborate on projects. As we continued the tour, we stopped to talk to two employees who were using one of the meeting lounges. One of the employees expressed her satisfaction with the openness and ampleness of the meeting space, and thought it was worth the reduction of her own personal office space.

Observing the new work style of FS employees has undoubtedly opened my eyes to factors that have to be considered when doing a similar major office renovation. For example, it was difficult for some FS employees to transition into a smaller office space. The guide explained that some of the employees created home offices in order to store all their documents and office belongings because they were unable to transition into a smaller, paperless environment. Some of the more introverted employees also had a harder time adjusting to the more open and collaborative environment. Another important consideration is even though sound proof technology was used to mitigate sound; employees can still hear foot traffic and conversations. In this case, facility managers try to accommodate employees as much as possible.

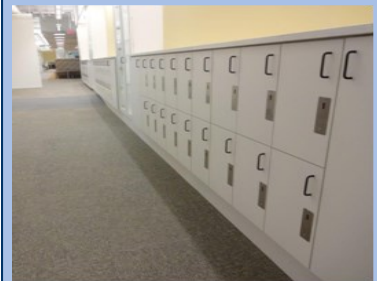
The renovation of the Yates Building is an example of what may be incorporated at the USDA Headquarters Complex as sections are renovated. Overall, the optimization of efficiency in the office space allows for communication and collaboration among employees, work place flexibility, and financial savings to the Department.



Hoteling Desk Space



Phone Booths



Lockers used by floaters



Lounge - People's Floor



Anchor Point